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Review

Reviewed Work(s): Medieval Lunar Astrology: A Collection of Representative Middle English Texts by Laurel Means

Review by: J. D. North

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larger size of celestial objects when near the horizon.

Article 10 is an account of Ibn al-Haytham's theory of visual perception.

Shifting to mathematics, three attempts to prove Euclid's postulate of parallels are presented, two by Thābit b. Qurra (d. 901) in article 12, the third, extant only in Arabic translation, by the sixth-century Simplicius in article 13.

Next are two articles on astronomy: article 14 describes Ibn al-Haytham's criticism of Ptolemy's mechanism for producing planetary latitudes; article 15 discusses the unsuccessful attempts of the Andalusian al-Bitrūjī (fl. 1200) to substitute assemblages of concentric spheres for Ptolemy's eccentrics and epicycles.

The concluding two papers are about logic. In his treatment of syllogisms Aristotle omitted the fourth figure, the invention of which was falsely attributed to Galen. Article 16 is about a defense of the fourth figure written by one Ibn al-Sarī, a twelfth-century scholar of Baghdad and Damascus. Included is a facsimile of the thirteen-page Arabic manuscript text. Last is an account of the contributions of a succession of Muslim thinkers to the ancient debate concerning the subject matter of logic. Is it a part or an instrument of philosophy? This treatment culminates with the views of Avicenna.

It is very good to have all these studies available within a single cover. Their utility is not diminished by the recent appearance of Sabra's superlative translation of and commentary on the first three books of Ibn al-Haytham's *Optics*.

E. S. KENNEDY

Laurel Means. *Medieval Lunar Astrology: A Collection of Representative Middle English Texts.* x + 352 pp., illus., fig., tables, apps., bibl. Lewiston, N.Y./Queenston, Canada: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993. \$99.95.

Most of those who have worked with medieval manuscripts, especially late medieval, will at one time or another have come across texts concerning prognostication on the basis of properties of the moon. Those who have delved deeper will have discovered that the texts are of many different types and that their titles rarely give any idea of their character. In particular, the title *lunaria* (*lunary*, or *lunarie* in Middle English) can mean almost anything connected with the moon—for example, it might merely indicate a volvelle or table giving the lunar phase. Laurel Means has prefixed what is first and foremost an edition of representative lunar-prognostic texts,

with brief glossary and commentaries, with an introduction in which she attempts to bring some order into the confusion. The texts she edits fall into two broad classes: one makes use of the lunar mansions (described somewhat ambiguously as the positions the moon occupies on successive days in a twenty-eight-, twenty-nine-, or thirty-day cycle around the earth). The other makes use of the zodiacal sign of the moon (especially the ascendant moon) at the time of interest. There are texts that do not fit easily into either category, and texts that supplement those named with yet other criteria for prognostication, but the distinction is a useful one with which to begin.

Books giving the days of the moon tend to give large numbers of prognostications on such themes as birth, illness, flight, business, marriage, dreams, agricultural affairs, and especially bloodletting. Middle English texts, meant for the less well educated, are often half-symbolic in character—with, say, a purse for prosperity, a sword for military success, and so on. Such pictographs supplement the ubiquitous planetary and zodiacal symbols in many manuscripts, although Means's volume makes no use of pictorial illustrations. The texts selected are almost invariably short and self-contained. The two longest printed here are in 774 and 788 lines of verse, respectively, and the rest are very much shorter. All assume some sort of auxiliary computation, at the very least of the moon's age; but reliance was obviously generally placed on published calendars, such as those of Peter of Dacia or Nicholas of Lynn, and no astronomical training of any great depth was demanded. When the ascendant was needed, more astronomical knowledge might have been called for, but again there were tables for simplifying the task of casting the ascendant and the houses, and the astro-labe offered another ancillary to the essentially simple astrological material. Means has little to say about the astronomical side of things, and her few remarks on this score are often puzzling—for example, her description of Nicholas of Lynn's *Kalendarium* as "more technical" than the treatise on the equatorium ascribed to Chaucer. Occasionally one's puzzlement dissolves as soon as her rather odd use of words is appreciated. Thus when she writes that the "conjunction of the moon with the sun and the degrees of the moon's ascension are initial factors in determining the day or month of the moon," she is using the word *month* to denote the "ascendant zodiacal sign of the moon," or something of the sort. By the same token, *day* and *mansion* are sometimes oddly used as synonyms.

Most determined readers of English, even without prior experience of late Middle English,

will be able to read the texts, which are provided with a brief glossary if not a full concordance. They will easily discover, for instance, that it is good to begin anything on the sixteenth day of the moon, when Necorne was born. Rummaging in the notes to the text will reveal variants on the name (Nachor, Nator, Natoy). Those who had forgotten that Nahor was the brother of Abraham (Genesis 11:29) will be able to discover the fact from the book, but only after two more searches in the textual notes. While the work is not overendowed with the indexes that might have helped here, this is not a particularly serious matter with simple material. More disappointing is that Means leaves largely unexplored the relation of her eighteen texts to Latin literature and that her selection of secondary modern literature is very patchy. There is little, for example, that could satisfy the student wishing to understand the rationale of lunar mansions or their history. Even so, the main objectives of the edition are fulfilled, and many a student of Middle English will be grateful for the texts that have now been put into the public domain.

J. D. NORTH

Klaus Jacobi (Editor). *Argumentationstheorie: Scholastische Forschungen zu den logischen und semantischen Regeln korrekten Folgerns*. (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters, 38.) xxxii + 791 pp., illus., figs., bibls., indexes. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993. Dfl 330, \$188.75.

Stephen Read (Editor). *Sophisms in Medieval Logic and Grammar*. (Nijhoff International Philosophy Series, 48.) (Acts of the Ninth European Symposium for Medieval Logic and Semantics, held at St. Andrews, June 1990.) xviii + 421 pp., fig., app., bibl., indexes. Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993. Dfl 270, \$157.50, £112.

The two volumes under review are the acts of the Eighth (*Argumentationstheorie*) and the Ninth (*Sophisms*) European Symposia for Medieval Logic and Semantics held, respectively, at Freiburg in Breisgau in 1988 and St. Andrews in 1990 (though the former volume does not announce that it consists of the proceedings of the eighth symposium). "The first Symposium consisted of three people in a café in Warsaw in 1973" (Stephen Read in the preface to *Sophisms*); for the second no volume published the contributions of the participants. Since then, the results of these symposia have been duly put into

print: *The Logic of John Buridan*, edited by Jan Pinborg (held in Copenhagen in 1975; published in 1976); *English Logic and Semantics from the End of the Twelfth Century to the Time of Ockham and Burleigh*, edited by H. A. G. Braakhuis *et alia* (Nijmegen, 1979; published 1981); *English Logic in Italy in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, edited by Alfonso Maierù (Rome, 1980; published 1982); *The Rise of British Logic*, edited by Osmund Lewry (Oxford, 1983; published 1983); and *Gilbert de Poitiers et ses contemporains aux origines de la logica modernorum*, edited by J. Jolivet and A. de Libera (Poitiers, 1985; published 1987). The tenth and eleventh symposia were held, respectively, in Nijmegen in 1992, treating of the reception and the discussion of Aristotle's *De interpretatione* in the Middle Ages, and in San Marino in 1994, the subject being semiotics and logic in medieval theological texts; their publication is intended but has not yet occurred. My purpose in this enumeration is to draw attention to the amount and importance of work being done in medieval logic. The history of logic in general is, of course, very much part of the history of science. And the "cottage industry" that has developed in investigating its medieval phase is not simply a passing fashion, though admittedly some of the interest in fourteenth-century logic, in particular, has been occasioned by concerns that were felt to be tolerably similar, rightly or wrongly, to those in twentieth-century philosophy of logic (propositional attitudes and possible world semantics, for example). Indeed, this connection between the medieval and the modern is not only noted, but noted with approbation, by both editors of these symposium volumes.

It is fair to say that, basically, there were three periods in the history of logic when importantly profitable activity occurred and notable innovations were made: in antiquity with Aristotle and Stoic logic, in the twelfth through fourteenth centuries (especially the latter) in the Latin West, and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the likes of George Boole, Gottlob Frege, and Bertrand Russell. It is also fair to say that what was accomplished in the second Latin medieval phase in logic far exceeded, in terms of sophistication and insight, what transpired in mathematics, astronomy, or even medicine in the Latin Middle Ages. Thus, the attention devoted to medieval logic as a significant part of the history of medieval science is well deserved.

These two symposium volumes contain fifty-eight articles. Obviously this is not the place to mention even their titles, let alone give an account of their contents. To take the volumes in chronological order: "Argumentationstheorie" is